

are being spent by the Federal agencies. The American people already see the government take far too much of their hard-earned paychecks, and they have a right to know how these dollars are being spent.

People across the country are struggling to find jobs and make ends meet. Now, imagine how frustrating it is for them to find out that some public officials are making extravagant salaries and receiving overly generous compensation packages, partially funded by the very dollars that they, the taxpayers, are sending to Washington.

What kind of message does that send? It makes the public lose faith in their elected officials, and it is morally wrong.

Reports in the Raleigh News and Observer indicate that in my home State of North Carolina, the executive director of the Raleigh Housing Authority is paid over \$280,000 annually and is also allowed to take up to 11 weeks of vacation and compensation time. The Raleigh Housing Authority is funded largely by Federal taxpayer dollars doled out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The practices at RHA certainly raise a red flag about how Federal dollars are being spent by local agencies. Last week, I requested a Federal audit of the RHA to make certain that they are adhering to the law. I also joined with Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY, who is a longtime advocate for oversight of public housing authorities, to send a letter to HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan requesting more answers and documentation regarding the questionable salary and compensation practices at the Raleigh Housing Authority.

HUD needs to ensure that taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately by the RHA and housing authorities across the country. HUD funds are intended for affordable housing for those in need, not for excessive compensation packages.

The RHA needs to justify their compensation and salary practices. The audit should publicize how the RHA has spent Federal money, how much is wasted, and what and how it can do to eliminate further wasteful spending while continuing to fulfill its mission.

Mr. Speaker, government transparency at RHA is not just important to my home State of North Carolina but to all of our government agencies. We are already spending Federal money at an unsustainable rate, and we need to eliminate areas where taxpayer dollars are being abused. If we do not ensure government transparency and cut wasteful spending, we will not only lose the faith of the American people completely, but our economy will continue to spiral downward.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, as we meet, 1.5 million Americans are out in the

cold, long-term unemployed, and added to that total 72,000 each week, an estimated, if we don't act, 3.6 million by the end of this year. Why is this? Partly because of myths, and I want to address them.

Myth one: the need for these benefits is over.

The truth, nearly 38 percent of the jobless are long-term unemployed, twice the rate when the emergency program started. The highest ever recorded before this recession was 26 percent of the unemployed were long-term.

Myth two: unemployment insurance creates dependency. As Senator RAND PAUL claimed, it is a "disservice."

The long-term unemployed in these eyes need to get off their duffs. It is this Congress that needs to get off its duff because the overwhelming research rebuts this notion. Indeed, unemployment insurance helps people look for work. People have said, we need gas money to go and look for a job. Recipients must actively look for work under the rules within their States. By the way, the average benefit is \$300 a week.

Myth three: jobs are there.

Get off your couch, it said, look. Wal-Mart came to D.C., had 600 jobs available; 23,000 people applied. A dairy in Hagerstown, Maryland, reopened; 36 jobs were available; 1,600 job applications. There are still 1 million fewer jobs today than when the recession began in 2007.

Myth four: North Carolina shows if you end unemployment insurance, the unemployment rate goes down because people go to work.

That is a myth. The unemployment rate in North Carolina went down primarily because people stopped looking for work. They gave up. This isn't America. It should not be North Carolina.

Myth 5: ninety-nine weeks is far too many.

Actually, the program hasn't had this emergency program 99 weeks for over 2 years. Last year, the longest was 73 weeks and only 3 States had that level. The average nationwide is 54 weeks. Now just one of four unemployed receive unemployment benefits at all, the lowest on record.

Myth six: you need to reduce the program as the unemployment rate goes down.

That is already done. We have four tiers, and already the amount of available benefits goes down in a State as the unemployment rate goes down.

The next myth: an extension must be offset.

This is an emergency program. None of the five UI extensions signed into law by President Bush—none of the five—was offset.

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People don't need it, is the next myth. In 2012—this is the Census Bureau information—this program lifted 2.5 million people out of poverty.

The next myth, what we need—and we hear this all the time—is economic growth, not unemployment insurance. Well, the GOP has stymied every key program to assist recovery, the infrastructure, whatever. The fact is that unemployment insurance helps economic growth. The CBO estimates 200,000 fewer jobs this year without an extension.

As we fight in this institution over issues of economic growth, let us not punish the long-term unemployed.

I was reading a statement by the president of the conservative think tank, American Enterprise Institute, an interview with him in October. And he said this:

One of the things, in my view, that we get wrong in the free enterprise movement is this war against the social safety net, which is just insane. The government social safety net for the truly indigent is one of the greatest achievements of our society. And we somehow want to zero out food stamps or something. It's nuts to want to be doing something like that. We have to declare peace on the safety net.

The Congress needs to act and the Republicans need to end their war on the long-term unemployed.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, we so often use the word "unemployment" that we lose an understanding of its deep social impact. When a person who is really trying very hard, cannot find good work, it causes much duress, not only to that person and to their family, but to society as a whole. Work is dignity. Good work unleashes the creative potential of the person. Unemployment or underemployment so often creates a spiraling effect on a person's well-being.

Part of our job as policymakers is to create and support the conditions for dynamic economic opportunity. Yet Washington continues to deal with the unemployment problem through political sound bites and simplistic solutions. These are not getting to the heart of the problem.

Across the country, many small businesses are not creating jobs. Part of the reason is the government itself. The burden of the health care law, for instance, and other regulations have dampened entrepreneurial spirit and created a great deal of uncertainty in the economy. This serious problem cannot simply be fixed by an extension of unemployment benefits.

If we want to be further forthright and honest about it, this problem is deeper than governmental solutions and business structure alone. It is a fracturing of our society. Many people have been left abandoned and have not had the gift of a formative community around them. They are alone. Mr. Speaker, all persons are made for community; and if someone is cast out into